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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - European Issues - Turkey
PARIS - Tuesday, October 04, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

European Issues - Turkey

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Because of today's widely followed social protest movement most national dailies were either not published or not distributed. Stories and commentaries available on the Internet serve as the basis for this report. As expected, many editorials and lead stories are devoted to PM Villepin's first social test. Left-of-center Le Monde, which came out last evening, headlines: "Jobs and Consumer Power: Villepin Faces the Unions." Economic Les Echos carries its first monthly poll on France's economic barometer: "The French are very critical of the government's economic policies. They are showing much impatience, which is symptomatic of a lasting social malaise." The poll indicates that 62 percent of respondents consider the government's economic policies to be "poor." But "surprisingly," says Les Echos, Villepin still enjoys a high personal rating of good opinions: 49 percent "trust him to deal with France's social problems." Seventy-two percent of respondents support today's strikes. Popular right-of-center Le Parisien, today's only paper edition, headlines: "But Where Is Chirac?" Le Parisien speculates about the President's lack of official declarations about France's social unrest: "His spectacular discretion since his cardiovascular incident is feeding the rumor mill."

Europe and Turkey are today's major international stories, as negotiations got underway last evening after much speculation and bartering. Reports focus on Austria having "caved in" after obtaining a go-ahead for negotiations with Croatia, and on France's support in spite of the EU referendum on the Constitution in May, where Turkey's membership played a decisive role. (See Part C) Several reports note a telephone conversation between Secretary Rice and Erdogan. Liberation writes: "Erdogan called Condoleezza Rice who called Jack Straw, whose country presides the EU." But Le Figaro reports: "To reassure Turkey's military, who fear Cyprus's NATO membership, Condoleezza Rice had to make a very firm call to Erdogan." Secretary Rice is quoted: "Negotiations with the EU do not interfere with NATO: the two issues are not related." Le Monde carries a European poll indicating that the French, the Germans and the Poles consider that being part of the EU has not improved their lifestyle. Forty-one percent of the French say that being part of the EU leaves them feeling their living standards have gotten worse; sixty-eight percent of the French say that to be more effective in foreign policy it is better to follow European rather than national measures. But when it comes to social protection 69 percent prefer to be under a French rather than a European system. The poll serves as the basis for Le Monde's editorial on France and its "euro-phobia."

Le Figaro and Liberation note President Bush's nomination of Harriet Miers to replace Sandra Day O'Connor. Le Figaro titles its report: "Bush Names a Faithful Follower" while Liberation titles its story: "Bush Names a 'Pitt Bull' to the Supreme Court."

Regional L'Alsace carried a story about Karen Hughes over the weekend titled: "President Bush's 'Lady Truth.'" "The American President is sending a woman he trusts completely to change America's image. A 'daunting' job according to Hughes, after her first visit abroad."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

European Issues - Turkey

"France's Euro-phobia"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (10/04): "France's 'no' vote to the EU constitution and the stalled EU expansion are not an accident. The poll conducted in Europe shows that

except for Spain, the predominant feeling about Europe is one of doubt. Europe is neither reassuring nor does it make anyone dream. Worse even, it is a source of worry. This is particularly true of France, which was one of the European Community's founding nations: for the French, the bottom line in the European adventure is mainly negative. This is not only a major challenge for France, it is a challenge for Europe. Our politicians have the difficult job of convincing the French that Europe is a pre-condition for collective prosperity."

"Europe, A Foundation for Peace"

Jean-Claude Arbona in regional La Nouvelle Republique du Centre Ouest (10/04): "We must learn to reason in global terms and on a wider scale. Closing the door to Turkey would mean pushing Turkey away from Europe and towards Asia. Turkey might have resented this and maybe made us pay for our gesture sometime in the future. Europe/Asia, Christianity/Islam: the EU is right to avoid a vain clash between civilizations. Peace is the foundation of Europe's construction."

"Turkey and Popular Fears"

Franck de Bondt in regional Sud Ouest (10/04): "In an open world, should not Europe's frontiers be recognizable by its common values? Must we, in the name of popular fears, turn our backs on Turkey and leave it to seek a relationship with Russia or Muslim radicalism? The lack of satisfaction with Europe expressed by the Germans and the French does not justify our missing this historic opportunity." STAPLETON